

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
ROOM 803, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2010, 11:00 A.M.**

**Voting Members present:**

Deke Copenhaver, Mayor of Augusta – **Chairman**  
Ulysses Mitchell (representing Vance Smith, GA  
DOT Commissioner)  
Ron Cross, Chairman, Columbia Co. Commission –  
**Vice- Chairman**  
C. H. Williams, Mayor of Burnettsville

**Voting Members absent:**

George James, Mayor of Grovetown  
Henry Taylor, SC – 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional  
District Commissioner, ½ vote  
Charles Dalton, SC – 3<sup>rd</sup> District Highway  
Commissioner, ½ vote  
Robert Buchwitz, Chairman Hephzibah  
Commission  
Ronnie Young, Chairman, Aiken County  
Council  
Col John Holwick – Fort Gordon  
Fred Cavanaugh, Mayor of Aiken  
Lark Jones, Mayor, North Augusta  
Patricia Cole, Mayor of Blythe

**Others Present (N = Nonvoting Member)**

**Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission**

George Patty  
Paul DeCamp  
Lynn Russell  
Marya Moultrie  
Juriah Lewis

**City of Augusta**

David Griffith  
Heyward Johnson

**Aiken County**

Gerald Jefferson

**GA DOT**

Reuben Woods  
Vonda Everett  
Cissy McNure

**LSCOG**

Lynnda Bassham

**Other**

Jeff Carroll, Wilbur Smith & Associates  
Shontrill Baskin, CSRA RC  
Clara Chanee, GA Citizen's Coalition on  
Hunger

1. **Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee meetings held on June 3, 2010.**

Mr. Cross moved to approve the minutes of the June 3, 2010 meeting. Mr. Mitchell seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

2. **Consider approval of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan.**

Mr. DeCamp introduced this item and Mr. Jeff Carroll made a presentation on the 2035 ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan. Jeff Carroll, with Wilbur Smith Associates, is here to make a brief presentation on the final draft version of the LRTP. This project has been ongoing for about ten months. This is the recommended final version of the plan. The public comment period is open for another four or five days. Comments have been received from FHWA and GA DOT and the City of Augusta has proposed to add two projects.

Mr. Carroll stated they have working on this update of the LRTP for the last ten plus months. Thanks were given to the participating organizations and staff for their help in preparing this document. This presentation will look at the base year, which is 2006... how the base year population and employment estimates are looking when projected to the year 2035. We will look at the highway conditions...will talk about revenues and expenditures expected to come in to the MPO and what it will cost for all the transportation projects. A list of the projects is included with the handout.

The study area includes all of Richmond County, portions of Columbia County, Edgefield County and Aiken County. Over the last ten months there has been an extensive public participation process. Six public meetings were conducted in the counties. The Advisory Committee, representing a variety of stakeholders in the study area, met three times to help direct and guide the plans update process. Meetings also were held with minority communities (environmental justice) within the study area.

Partnership has been extremely important in this process. Being a bi-state MPO we had to work with GA DOT, SC DOT and all the different counties and municipalities within the study area. All the information you see today has been vetted through these partners. We looked at existing transportation plans and studies that have been done in the area to make sure those recommendations have been accounted for in this update. The base year (2006) and plan year (2035) socioeconomic data were updated as part of the technical analysis phase.

The base year population in 2006 is 406,860. The estimated population in 2035 will be 553,467 living in the study area. That study area boundary certainly could change with the 2010 Census. There will be approximately 146,600 new residents in 2035, reflecting a 1.2% annual growth rate. The socioeconomic estimates and projections were made by ARTS staff and others in each local jurisdiction. Richmond County is not growing as fast as the other counties. Edgefield County shows a 178% increase in population. The reason being it is that the Edgefield County part of the study area had an estimated 2,000 residents in 2006 and that is projected to increase to 5,000-6,000 in 2035. There are a lot of factors that will impact our highways, transit systems and other transportation modes.

On the employment side, the base year shows 162,219 with a projection to 209,788 in 2035. There will be 47,569 new jobs by 2035, reflecting a 1% annual growth rate. At the county level, the percentages increase in employment will range from 28% to 32%. The medical complex, Fort Gordon, and the Savannah River Site, which is outside the study area, will continue to be among the largest employers.

When updating a Long Range Transportation Plan you have to use a travel demand model. This is where GA DOT assisted in the update. They operate and maintain the travel demand model for the MPO. This slide shows the base year 2006 Level of Service (LOS) on the major roads in the study

area. Level of service A, B and C are the numbers you strive for and D, E and F you stay away from. Congestion is not too extensive in the base year, based on 24-hour traffic counts. In the year 2035 Columbia County's arterials are showing increased congestion. Pockets of congestion are also evident around I-520 in Augusta and in Aiken. We looked at the projects in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and for any new projects that could be added to help alleviate the congestion such as new roadway locations, widening, intersection improvements, park and ride facilities, bicycle and pedestrian system. You obviously cannot continue to just widen roadways to alleviate the congestion. You need to increase the use of other modes of transportation. One of the biggest ways is to increase the use of public transportation. There are three transit providers in the study area. The main issue for transit systems is to have sufficient operating funds to provide or increase the service.

Most everyone is aware that air quality has been an issue here and may become more of an issue when EPA completes the reconsideration of the federal ozone standards. The ozone standards will likely be strengthened, thereby increasing the likelihood of nonattainment designation for part of the ARTS area. In updating the Long Range Transportation Plan, it was assumed that the projects will be subject to air quality conformity testing mandated for nonattainment areas.

The two key metrics for air quality are vehicle miles travelled and vehicle hours of travel. In 2006 there were almost 11 million daily miles of travel on the MPO roadways. In the 2035 no build scenario, it jumps to almost 16 million daily vehicles miles travelled. By comparison, vehicle hours of delay are projected to increase from about 324,000 hours in 2006 to approximately 600,000 hours in 2035 under the no build scenario. Under the financially-constrained plan vehicle hours of delay increase to 549,000 hours, which is 19% lower than under the no build scenario. If the study area is designated nonattainment, the projects in the plan should withstand air quality scrutiny depending on emissions budgets set by the two states.

Over the next 25 years, the total projected revenue for transportation projects is \$3.2 billion for the Georgia part of the study and \$284.7 million for the South Carolina part. Ninety percent (90%) is federal and state funding with 5% local and 3% for transit (federal / state) and 4% local public transportation. The projected revenue is based on historic trends and reflects about 2.5 percent increase in funds each year.

On the Georgia side, the Long Range Transportation Plan shows that 77% of the money will be spent on capacity projects. The survey results indicated that people are looking for other transportation options. Public transportation gets about 7% of the funds and bicycle and pedestrian projects will get three percent. Intersection improvements (2%), maintenance and operations (6%), bridge projects (3%), park and ride projects (1%) and safety projects (1%) are included as well.

On the South Carolina side 67% of the funding will be used on capacity projects, 17% on public transportation, 5% on bicycle and pedestrian projects, 10% on intersections and just less than 1% (\$1.2million) on park and ride projects.

Balancing expected revenue and expenditures is one requirement of the plan update process. Project costs are based on a 4% inflation rate compounded. The Long Range Transportation Plan is financially constrained because projected expenditures do not exceed projected revenue. Projects on the Georgia side have \$3.02 billion available funding compared to \$2.7 billion in expenditures.

South Carolina has \$285 million in available funding and \$250 million in expenditures. A complete list of projects can be viewed on the ARTS website.

Projects in the Long Range Transportation Plan are divided into three tiers. Tier I is from 2011 - 2014, which are the current Transportation Improvement Program years. Tier II is for the years 2015 through 2024 and Tier III cover the years 2025 through 2035. The plan will be updated every five years and can be amended at any time it is needed. In the event of nonattainment designation, the plan will be updated every four years.

As part of this process, a tool was developed to prioritize projects in the South Carolina part of the study area. This was done to comply with Act 114, which is a South Carolina law that requires all MPOs and COGs to use criteria to prioritize widening projects, intersection improvements and new location projects. South Carolina DOT was extremely helpful in the process of developing this tool.

All the public and environmental justice meetings have been held. The draft plan is available for review at all the area libraries, local government agencies, on the ARTS website and at other locations. GA DOT and FHWA have already made their comments and they were addressed.

An environmental justice study was not part of the Long Range Plan update. Federal Executive Order 12898 requires outreach activities to obtain input from low-income and minority communities regarding transportation needs and problems. An appendix to the Long Range Transportation Plan will provide details on all public participation activities, including meetings and other outreach to environmental justice communities in the study area. In updating the Long Range Transportation Plan public meetings were held with environmental justice communities. All comments have been documented and will be addressed in the final version of the plan.

Mr. Cross moved to adopt the 2035 ARTS Long Range Transportation Plan update. Mr. Mitchell seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **3. Consider approval of the ARTS FY 2011 - 2014 Transportation Improvement Program.**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. Public information meetings were held in conjunction with the Long Range Transportation Plan update public meetings. Some things have changed since the draft TIP was approved in May. Projects that have moved to construction include the widening of Alexander Drive, the bridge reconstruction on SR 232 @ Euchee Creek in Columbia County and several ARRA- funded projects including resurfacing in all three of the counties. In addition, the Broad St. street light upgrade project is to begin early next month. Finally, both transit systems have either spent or obligated ARRA funds that were awarded to them. As far as changes to projects in South Carolina, construction of the Dougherty @ Silver Bluff Road intersection improvements has shifted from FY 09 to FY 10. Construction on the Silver Bluff Road corridor project has been shifted from FY 2012 to FY 2013 and the planned park and ride lot at Exit 5 on I-20, which was added to last year's TIP, has been added to the FY 2011-14 TIP.

Regarding projects in Georgia, the Bobby Jones Expressway widening project (PI #210700) has a slight increase in funding for construction and utilities. Funding in the amount of \$453,166 has been added for preliminary engineering on the median barrier project on Gordon Highway (PI #

222710). Due to financial constraint, the majority of funds for right-of-way on the SR 56 / Mike Padgett Highway project (PI #0006431) have been shifted to FY 2013. An additional \$2.6 million has been programmed for right-of-way on the Windsor Spring Phase IV widening project (PI # 250610).

In Columbia County, the Columbia Road widening project did not make right-of-way in 2010 so \$1.9 million is being programmed for right-of-way in 2011. Right-of-way funding for the Flowing Wells Road widening project was reduced from \$11 million to \$8.6 million due to financial constraints and the need to program other projects. The reconstruction of the bridge on Columbia Road at Walton Branch is a new project.

There were no substantial changes to transit, ITS or lump sum funding. Based on input from GA DOT, small amounts of funding were added for special studies on the Third Infantry Division Highway and the Fourteenth Amendment Highway projects. The MPO has been invited to be a part of the Expert Working Groups (EWP) established for these two studies. These studies will be undertaken by consultants hired by FHWA.

Mr. Mitchell moved to approve the FY 2011 - 2014 TIP. Mr. Cross seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **5. Status of Projects:**

### **(a) Georgia Highways**

Mrs. Everett presented this item. Four stimulus-funded resurfacing projects received a Notice to Proceed this week, three on Walton Way and one Laney Walker Boulevard. In the section with projects to be let in the next three months, there are five major resurfacing projects on SR 4 and SR 10 to be let in September, and the Augusta State University History Walk Phase IV is to be let in November.

Project updates include:

- William Few Parkway Extension – still battling environmental issues and permits.
- Flowing Wells Road Widening – at a standstill at this point since the turn lanes are working.
- Old Petersburg / Old Evans Road Widening – Right-of-Way acquisition has resumed. 225 of 284 parcels have been acquired.
- Wrightsboro Road Widening - 150 of 182 parcels have been acquired. Final Plans are 80% complete. Construction is scheduled for FY 2015.
- I-520 from Gordon Highway to US 1 (Deans Bridge Road) – is in Right-of-way phase. Appraisals are being prepared. Construction is scheduled for FY 2012.

Mr. Cross asked what might happen on the extension of River Watch Parkway. Could the TSPLOST change this? The completion of this parkway could change 30-40% of the traffic patterns in Columbia County. If you could get off Washington Road in Evans and have a straight shot downtown, a lot of the traffic would be alleviated from the McDonald's in Evans through Martinez to the Richmond County Line. This has been critical to the Columbia County's planning and

development for years. The money is a tremendous amount but is there any talk of when it might be available?

The TSPLOST authorized by the Georgia General Assembly under HB 277 is a potential source of funding for the Old Petersburg / Old Evans Road widening project (PI #250470), also referred to as the River Watch Parkway extension. The project first would have to be on the final project list approved by the Regional Roundtable. A vote on the TSPLOST would be conducted on August 21, 2012. If the sales tax is approved by voters, TSPLOST funds would begin flowing to local governments in the first quarter of 2013.

Mrs. Everett stated that SR 821, also approved this year, would authorize GA DOT to enter into multi-year construction agreements. GA DOT would be able to bid and award more projects each year if the ballot question is approved by voters in November,

### **(b) South Carolina Highways**

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. There were no significant changes since the last report.

DOT has moved forward on the final design plans for the widening on Silver Bluff from Indian Creek Trail to Richardson Lake Drive. The ARTS South Carolina Policy Subcommittee has to approve the planned improvements at two intersections, Harwell Drive and Richardson Lake Road. Right of way issues need to be worked on.

### **(c) Augusta Public Transit**

Mr. Johnson presented this item. A public hearing was held on June 3<sup>rd</sup> regarding the elimination of the Medical Center transit route. Thirteen people were in attendance who opposed eliminating the route. The Augusta Public Service Committee voted to eliminate the route on July 9, 2010. A week later calls were received from the Augusta Commissioners with complaints from Ervin Towers. They complained of not receiving notice about elimination of the route. Staff met with the group and the Walton Way route was changed to serve Ervin Towers and the route headway was increased from 30 to 40 minutes.

Three 35-foot low floor buses are being purchased from Bush Industries of America out of New York. The buses will be delivered in October. Two more vehicles have been ordered and will be delivered in April or May of next year. Specifications are out for installing bike racks on all of the transit vehicles using ARRA funds. An earmark received two years ago will be used to purchase three more vehicles.

A grant application was submitted to FTA to pay for the engineering and design work for the new maintenance facility on Highway 56 and to move the current transfer facility from Broad Street to the Regency Mall area.

**(d) Aiken County Transit**

Mrs. Bassham presented this item. On August 17, LSCOG celebrated the grand opening of the new building built with transit and ARRA funds. It houses one of three national demonstration projects in the country. It is a one call center for transportation information and assistance and is the center for regional transit coordination among a network of transit providers in the six county region. The center will also use intelligent transportation technology to lead coordination among public and human service transit providers in the six counties, and on board partnering agency vehicles. Both fixed route and demand-response vehicles will have automatic vehicle location and mobile data computers on board as well as digital radios equipment that link to law enforcement and emergency management in the event of an emergency. A new telephone system will link to interactive voice response software to make reverse calls to passengers to remind them of appointments and imminent arrivals of pick-ups.

There was a ribbon cutting followed by a luncheon. Peter Appel, Administrator of the Federal Research and Innovative Technology Administration with the US Department of Transportation, the new Deputy Secretary for Freight and Intermodal Programs from SC DOT; Beth Taylor from Region 4 Atlanta Office and Director of State Unit on Aging were all in attendance. One of the passengers on the Best Friend Express, Althea Smith gave a heartfelt speech on the real impact of having the transit system was on her and her family. She went from an abused women's shelter to a homeowner about to graduate from college. She has been selected by the American Public Transit Association to lobby Congress later this month.

Four of the five buses are now wrapped with marketing information courtesy of the grant. Rave reviews have been received on the wraps. They have the silhouette of things you can do when you are not driving such as talking on the phone, working on the laptop, drink your coffee or just relax and think.

New bus shelters are going up at the campus of Aiken Regional Medical Centers, USC-Aiken and the Housing Authority in Aiken.

**7. Update on Special Studies Projects:**

**(a) City of Aiken and Aiken Special Studies**

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. The US 1 / US 78 study contract has been negotiated with Wilbur Smith and Associates and the County Attorney is reviewing the contract language. A Notice to Proceed should be issued by the end of the month.

The travel demand model for the Aiken County urbanized area that has been done by SC DOT is being reviewed by the Cities of Aiken and North Augusta. Additional input is being received and the model should be reviewed and updated within the next few weeks.

Wilbur Smith and Associates is also preparing the North Side Road study. A draft needs assessment has been submitted to the city of Aiken and city representatives would like to meet with the consultants next week to go over the report.

Aiken County is issuing an RFP for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in November 2010.

## **8. Update on Air Quality Initiatives**

### **(a) Aiken County**

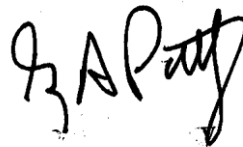
Mr. Jefferson presented this item. EPA is delaying the release date of the National Air Quality standards for ozone until October 31, 2010. A letter of recommendation was sent to DHEC on Monday. Two additional endeavors were added that Aiken County is working on to improve air quality. It suggested that there were two small towns / municipalities they were splitting in half with their boundaries. It doesn't make sense that one side of the street be included and not the other when looking at air quality boundaries in a small town or municipality. The recommendation is to either include or exclude all of the town or municipalities.

The Town of Burnetown recently enacted Ordinances that ban outdoor burning from April 1 through October 31 of each year.

### **(b) Richmond County**

Ms. Moultrie presented this item. Once the revised standards are released by EPA, we will hold a meeting of the CSRA Air quality Alliance to discuss what the new standards mean and the implications of potential non attainment. In the meantime, we continue to partner with the Georgia Clean Air Campaign and distribute information on air quality improvement tips and initiatives through our quarterly ARTS Newsletter. The CSRA Air Quality Alliance website also continues to be updated as needed.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.**



George A. Patty  
Project Director